



Influenza: The Hundred-Year Hunt to Cure the Deadliest Disease in History

Jeremy Brown

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On the 100th anniversary of the devastating pandemic of 1918, Jeremy Brown, a veteran ER doctor, explores the troubling, terrifying, and complex history of the flu virus, from the origins of the Great Flu that killed millions, to vexing questions such as: are we prepared for the next epidemic, should you get a flu shot, and how close are we to finding a cure?

While influenza is now often thought of as a common and mild disease, it still kills over 30,000 people in the US each year. Dr. Jeremy Brown, currently Director of Emergency Care Research at the National Institutes of Health, expounds on the flu's deadly past to solve the mysteries that could protect us from the next outbreak. In *Influenza*, he talks with leading epidemiologists, policy makers, and the researcher who first sequenced the genetic building blocks of the original 1918 virus to offer both a comprehensive history and a roadmap for understanding what's to come.

Dr. Brown digs into the discovery and resurrection of the flu virus in the frozen victims of the 1918 epidemic, as well as the bizarre remedies that once treated the disease, such as whiskey and blood-letting. *Influenza* also breaks down the current dialogue surrounding the disease, explaining the controversy over vaccinations, antiviral drugs like Tamiflu, and the federal government's role in preparing for pandemic outbreaks. Though 100 years of advancement in medical research and technology have passed since the 1918 disaster, Dr. Brown warns that many of the most vital questions about the flu virus continue to confound even the leading experts.

Influenza is an enlightening and unnerving look at a shapeshifting deadly virus that has been around long before people—and warns us that it may be many more years before we are able to conquer it for good.

Influenza: The Hundred-Year Hunt to Cure the Deadliest Disease in History Details

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Author : Jeremy Brown

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From Reader Review Influenza: The Hundred-Year Hunt to Cure the Deadliest Disease in History for online ebook

Janet says

I received a DIGITAL Advance Reader Copy of this book from #NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

From the publisher, as I do not regurgitate the contents or story of books in reviews, I let them do it.

Dr Jeremy Brown, a veteran ER doctor, explores the troubling, terrifying, and complex history of the flu virus, from the surprising origins of the 1918 flu that killed millions, to vexing questions such as: are we prepared for the next epidemic, should you get a flu shot, and how close are we to finding a cure?

While influenza is now often thought of as a mild disease, it kills thousands each year. Dr Jeremy Brown, currently Director of Emergency Care Research at the National Institutes of Health, expounds on the flu's deadly past to solve the mysteries that could protect us from the next outbreak. In *Influenza*, he talks with leading epidemiologists, policymakers, and the researcher who first sequenced the genetic building blocks of the virus to offer both a comprehensive history and a roadmap for understanding what's to come. Dr Brown digs into the discovery and resurrection of the flu virus in the victims of the 1918 epidemic exhumed from the tundra, as well as the bizarre remedies that once treated the disease, such as fatal doses of aspirin and blood-letting.

Influenza also breaks down the current dialogue surrounding the disease, explaining the controversy over vaccinations, antiviral drugs, and the government's role in preparing for a pandemic. Dr Brown warns that many of the most vital questions about the flu virus continue to confound even the leading experts.

Influenza is an enlightening and unnerving look at a shapeshifting deadly virus that has been around since long before people and will most likely be with us for a long time to come.

It has been a century since the pandemic of 1918 killed millions upon millions yet we still do not have a cure for the flu. Yes, we have flu shots that help lessen the symptoms but the CDC still cannot control it or kill it. Nor can they force people to get the vaccine as so many mothers and fathers are anti-vax in regards to their children or afraid that it will give you the flu.

Much like the current outbreak sickening and killing people via romaine lettuce, viruses can last and mutate and the simplest thing like a bowl of salad or a burger from Jack in the Box (*E. coli*) or a sneeze (the common cold and the flu) can kill. Ditto for MRSA – if we cannot “kill” the flu we cannot eradicate a lot of sicknesses.

My husband, a History Channel Documentary addict likes to talk of how in 1918 people were buried in mass graves on the edge of town (Victoria Harbour where is mom and dad were from did this). A trip through any older cemetery will show a lack of people buried in 1918 as people were terrified that it could come off the bodies. If you look you will find scads of graves where siblings died within days of each other – one mass grave with headstones in Niagara Falls had eight siblings die in a two-month span in 1919.

I applaud Dr. Brown on digging up information (and bodies!) in the research of this book – he is entertaining yet very knowledgeable of the subject. And brave. Seriously brave. With no cure a century later, he was heroic in his digging up of bodies in order to understand how it spread worldwide in so little time for no apparent reason and how it went from person to person (especially in tear-inducing scenes on “*Downton Abbey*”!) Also, I always wondered about bloodletting and why they did it --- sometimes the “cure” can kill, ditto for massive doses of aspirin. Now I kind of understand it due to Dr Brown.

Will we ever CURE the flu? It is hard to say but we may be able to contain it. Or understand how it spreads.

But if we cannot even contain something like MRSA as diseases become “smarter” and medication-resistant I am unsure that we will ever conquer the flu.

Great cook, Dr. Brown – you deserve ?????

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Dawn Michelle says

HOW do you review a book like this? I could absolutely do a term paper on this book and with a little more research and a few more notes [than what I already took], I could write a research paper on this book. But a review for Goodreads and NetGalley? THAT will be a little more difficult. So I am going to give it my best attempt [and I am sure this will be edited quite a bit while I am writing it] and I will hope for the best.

I will say to start, that this was one of the best books I have read in a long time, and one of the best-written nonfiction books I have read this year [Educated by Tara Westover is also one of the best-written books I have read as well]. This is not some dry, textbook-like tome. This book is full of facts and information yes, but there is also humor [which was unexpected] and optimism, which was also unexpected. The author doesn't shy away from unpopular opinions and speaks both what he sees as truth and believes to be truth, based on the exhaustive research he has done on this subject. I learned things I never knew [like what ECMO means - I have heard that in medical shows on TV all the time but had NO IDEA what it stood for {extracorporeal membrane oxygenation - basically, the heart/lung machine}], and confirmed things I had known [bloodletting IS bad!!] all along.

This book also gave me facts that blew my mind - in the 1918 Pandemic, it is estimated that between 50 - 100 million people died; 675,000 in the US alone [which is 10x as many as died in the Great War {that was just ending when the Pandemic broke out}]. And should an Pandemic of this level happen today, the estimate of death is close to 2 million people in the US alone. Those numbers are numbing and horrifying. To quote the book, "One hundred years after the pandemic of 1918, we have learned an enormous amount about influenza. We know its genetic code [And THAT is a great chapter in this book; how they are able to do this is absolutely fascinating], how it mutates, and how it makes us sick, and yet we still don't have effective ways to fight it. The antiviral medications we have are pretty useless, and the flu vaccine is a poor defense. In good year it is effective only half the time, and in 2018 the record was even worse; the vaccine was only effective in about one-third of those who received it [or about 20%]."

If you are a pessimist, you will believe that there will be another pandemic like the one of 1918. If you are an optimist, you believe that our defenses are well enough placed to ward off a pandemic, though there could still be some problems. And if you are a realist, like the author, you believe a little of both. With all the information given here, it will be quite some time before I am sure what I believe and where I lie on that spectrum.

There is BIG business and money in Influenza though and so the vaccines go on, even with the knowledge that they consistently do not work. There is HUGE money in the antivirals [the chapter on that will absolutely blow your mind], again with the knowledge that they consistently [and is proven] do not work. And we the public are bombarded with information that is has little truth to it but is touted as gospel and I think that is the biggest take from this book that scares me the most. Because ultimately, the very people we

think that would help save us should a pandemic happen, have very little clue on how to actually DO that. They know how and where and why, but the treatment has and continues to baffle them. To quote the book again: "The impulse to do *something*, to react in the face of catastrophe, is a common theme in our fight against influenza." And that, is where the problem truly lies.

A VERY good read, one I recommend people to find and read themselves. We will never move forward without the masses themselves educating themselves about issues like this and making the best informed decision for *themselves* and not just what the government is telling them is truth and what to believe.

Thank you to NetGalley and Touchstone Publishing for providing this ARC in exchange for an honest review.

chan says

3.75/5 stars

Content includes depictions of severe cases of influenza and suicide

Very engaging read that got a bit dry towards the end when the economy and pharmaceutical companies become a subject matter, but overall I really enjoyed it.

Full review to come..

Deborah Stevens says

A worldwide pandemic disease, untreatable and often fatal, with a dodgy vaccine that many people do not choose to get?

Not Station Eleven dystopian fiction, but an account of the Spanish Flu of 1918, and lots of information on present day flu bugs, treatments, policies, etc.

Well-researched and credible, but also very readable. Recommended for anyone with an interest in medicine, science, or whether to get a fu vaccination! Thanks to NetGalley and Touchstone for an ARC in exchange for my honest review.

Anett Kovacs says

Note: I received an ARC of this book from NetGalley.

ER doctor Jeremy Brown explores a century of flu in *Influenza: The Quest to Cure the Deadliest Disease in History*. From the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic, which didn't even start in Spain to the 2009 H1N1 "pandemic", which, to be precise, wasn't really a pandemic, the author gives a very thoroughly researched account of the history of the influenza virus and humanity's relationship with it. He focuses on the 1918 strain, describes the journey of its discovery, "decryption", and the dangers associated with it. He digs deep into the politics and economics behind influenza and unearths ugly truths and controversies about antifu medications.

The author highlights the challenges we're facing today concerning the significance of statistics, the problems with predictions and the mess made by mutations.

He describes remedies that didn't work back then, like bloodletting and remedies that don't particularly work now, like antifu medicine and how even though we've come so far, we still don't have a working solution for the influenza issue.

Overall it's a very well written and easily understandable book packed with interesting information around the "deadliest disease in history" and how after 100 years of research the possibly "best cure" is still chicken soup and bed rest.

Jan says

I'm not certain who will benefit most from this book. The very beginning could be quite off putting to the general public while paramedicals like me are entranced. Lots of it is easily comprehensible to most, while some sections might make some folks glassy eyed. Yet you ask why I recommend it to everyone.

Simple. Historians, research minded, descendants, patients, and those in paramedical fields will benefit from the research and perspectives laid out in this book. Whether you want to know how influenza traveled, why this particular strain is not freely active, how vaccines are developed, what treatments were used throughout history for the illness and if/when some were finally discarded, and just why the grandmothers were right about dosing with chicken soup, you will find your answers here.

I had the grandest time reading this one, and I have read a number of others, because of the logical way that sections are organized as well as some areas having a slightly different perspective than some others. I hope that many others will at least learn a lot from it.

I requested and received a free ebook copy from Touchstone/Simon and Schuster Publishing via NetGalley. Thank you!

Lori L (She Treads Softly) says

Influenza: The Hundred Year Hunt to Cure the Deadliest Disease in History by Jeremy Brown is a very highly recommended, fascinating exploration of the history of the flu virus and the search for a cure.

The 1918 Flu pandemic left an estimated 50 to 100 million people dead worldwide. Ever since then the search has been on to find a cure before the outbreak another world wide influenza pandemic. Brown discusses where the 1918 flu may have started (we don't know for certain) and the various cures that have been tried over the years. Now we know influenza is a virus and that virus mutates into other strains of the flu, making a cure even more challenging. In a conversational style, Dr. Jeremy Brown, currently Director of Emergency Care Research at the National Institutes of Health, shares information from leading epidemiologists, policy makers, and the researcher who first sequenced the genetic building blocks of the original 1918 virus.

He doesn't shy away from the many questions and misinformation swirling around vaccinations, anti-viral drugs, and government preparation for the next epidemic. He also tackles the media's role in exaggeration and swaying public opinion through emotion, anxiety, and misinformation, as well as the more recent role of social media outbreak spreading misinformation, exaggeration, and fear faster than the actual flu virus was spreading. He also discusses the pharmaceutical companies influence and their lobbying efforts, which are largely based on fear.

Deaths from the flu do occur every year and there are groups of the population that are more susceptible, but this does not include everyone. Dr. Brown points out several different public panics over influenza outbreaks (which I clearly remember), and how the actual outbreak was not as huge as the fear spread through the media. Additionally, information people hear on the news, whether it is correct or fact-based or not, makes people and policy makers start quoting and spreading the misinformation.

This is an eminently well-written and engrossing examination of the history and current information about the influenza virus. The conversational writing style and the logical organization of the book make the information easily understood and assimilated, even for those readers who typically shun medical/historical nonfiction. As is my wont for informational nonfiction selections, I always appreciated the inclusion of notes, a complete bibliography, and an index.

Disclosure: My review copy was courtesy of Simon & Schuster.
<http://www.shetreadssoftly.com/2018/1...>

The Irregular Reader says

Jeremy Brown brings the focus of an ER physician to his history of the annual malady we are all so familiar with. On the 100 year anniversary of the 1918 "Spanish" Flu pandemic, Brown examines the nature of that strain, and of the influenza virus itself.

Brown gives us an on-the-ground look at flu season, the flu vaccine, and how (un)prepared we are for another pandemic the likes of 1918.

Perhaps the most intriguing part of the book deals with the approach to treating the flu in 1918, well before viruses had been discovered, versus the approach to treating the flu today. While the scientific community has made great strides in learning about the causes and mechanics of the flu, we have made surprisingly little headway into finding an effective way to combat it. Thus far, the influenza virus seems to defy all our attempts to mitigate it.

A thought-provoking read, with a good dose of science and history, but readable even to those who might normally shun the genre. With the likelihood of a world-wide pandemic fairly high in the near future, this seems a timely read.

Andrea says

Wow. Great book. The author is successful at explaining why influenza is a very complicated thing medically. He enumerated many of the medical descriptions of what the flu is, how does it grow and attack the body on a cellular level, as well as the constantly evolving virus. He strikes the nearly impossible balance of retaining the medical explanation and putting it in terms that a non-medical person can understand. I've read several books about the 1918 pandemic but none have covered it on a clinical level instead of just a series of vignettes of flu victims. I now have an understanding of why the 1918 flu was so dangerous and why there is no cure for influenza.

David says

Here's an idea: on the 100-year anniversary of the Spanish flu pandemic, a history of the flu written by an actual doctor. In this case, a medical doctor who actually has seen perhaps hundreds of cases of the flu himself provides an interestingly unique viewpoint. He's also a good writer.

Although the title and marketing of this book might lead you to believe it is about the 1918 pandemic, it really isn't.

It is about influenzas generally, and travels back and forth in time (without being at all confusing) from the author's present-day experience as an ER doctor to about 430 BC, when Thucydides made what is probably the oldest written record of an influenza-like outbreak. However, if you are going to write a history of influenzas generally, the 1918 pandemic is going to loom large in the narrative, and it does here.

Since I teach English, I think more about what words mean than the average clam, and this book made me realize that I have been, to my deep pedagogical shame, using the words *epidemic* and *pandemic* interchangeably. In my defense, I can only repeat information in this book, that is, *The New York Times* has publicly admitted that the definition depends largely on who is speaking. Furthermore, the author says, “[n]o one really agrees on exact meanings” (Kindle location 450).

The author continues:

The most useful definition we have is that an *epidemic* is a severe local outbreak, while a *pandemic* is a global outbreak that makes people very sick, and spreads rapidly from a point of origin.

New topic: toward the end of the book, there is quite a bit of interesting information about those villains at large pharmaceutical companies stirring up a sense of panic among the population in order to get bureaucrats and lawmakers to buy an expensive load of flu vaccine for emergency stockpiles.

I found the ending to be less than completely pleasing. In it, the author sets up two straw man arguments -- optimists and pessimists -- and then knocks them down before declaring himself to be a “realist”. It's hard to fault someone for being a realist, but I don't think he demonstrated that people who hold different views from his are somehow not “realists”.

After declaring himself a realist, the author says that the 1918 flu epidemic does not loom large enough in our collective memory, and suggests that a new memorial be built here in Washington DC in honor of those who died. It's hard to object to a memorial without appearing hard-hearted, but I think the city is already starting to experience monument overload. I don't see a monument having much of an effect other than perhaps making us feel good for a moment. Better history education would be a better solution, but better education is difficult and expensive. Still, accept no substitutes.

I received a free electronic advance review copy of this book via Netgalley and Simon & Schuster.

Andi says

Fascinating!! I learned quite a lot about the history of influenza, specifically about the 1918 outbreak. Dr. Brown's writing is compelling, understandable, and eye-opening. I definitely recommend reading it.

Nannette says

Influenza: The Hundred Year Hunt to Cure the Deadliest Disease in History
Audiobook – Unabridged
Dr. Jeremy Brown (Author)
Holter Graham (Narrator)
Simon & Schuster Audio (Publisher)

Dr. Jeremy Brown has written an easy to read history of the influenza virus that reads like the best of detective fiction. His writing combined with Holter Graham's warm narration make a very approachable look at a fascinating and frankly terrifying subject. It is an audiobook that I will listen to again.

Many readers are acquainted with the Spanish Flu that killed millions in 1919. The Prologue tells the story of a flu victim, a healthy young woman, who almost died. Not in underdeveloped country and not in 1919. It was in the United States in 2013. Brown's book creates a very understandable link between the historic flu, the present strains, and what the future of the flu could be. Brown also educates us on historic flu treatments (enemas!) and recent treatments like Tamiflu.

Influenza will be a wonderful read for those who enjoy history, medical mysteries, as well as the economics of pharmacology. I enjoyed the writing style and the narration equally. I would be interested in other books written by Dr. Jeremy Brown and/or narrated by Holter Graham.

Ron says

Influenza by Dr. Jeremy Brown

I received a DIGITAL Advance Reader Copy of this book from #NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

2018 is the 100th anniversary of the Influenza pandemic of 1918 that killed 50 to 100 million people worldwide and infected as many as a third of the world's population. Dr. Brown not only documents the events of 1918 but more importantly explores research and breakthroughs in the field since then. With this added knowledge, he lets the reader ponder whether another pandemic is likely to happen again, and if so, how deadly would it be. Surprisingly, medicine may not have progressed as far as most of us would like to think. Dr. Jeremy Brown, director of Emergency Care Research at the National Institutes of Health, along with his exhaustive research is well qualified to tell us this story.

In documenting the history of the disease, "Influenza" covers many interesting stories including the need to recover the bodies of 1918 influenza victims that remained frozen in the Alaskan tundra since their death. Brown also delves into the economic and social impact of flu and today's fight against the virus and the immunizations that remain controversial to this day.

Much has been written about the 1918 pandemic but this book goes beyond the story of 1918. It follows the disease for a century and documents our fight against it.

Glenda says

“Influenza” is a fascinating look at the history of flu outbreaks and both the medical and political implications of medical research and health policy. The historical account of the flu epidemic of 1918 is interesting, but the ways the pharmaceutical industry has manipulated public policy is important, particularly in regard to Tamiflu, the anti-viral drug the CDC has stockpiled and once hailed as a miracle cure for the flu. The book is short but packed w/ important information about how to treat the flu, when to see a doctor, research into treatments, and cultural and climate factors related to the flu.
